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School Committee Minutes 05/26/2009

Approved by School Committee June 23, 2009

**THE ARLINGTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2009
7:30 P.M.**

Present: Joe Curran, Chair Denise Burns, Vice Chair
Joe Curro, Secretary Leba Heigham
Cindy Starks Ronald Spangler
Jeff Thielman

Interim Superintendent: Kathleen Bodie
Chief Financial Officer: Sue Mazzarella
Special Education Director: Mark Ryder
Student Reps: Lauren Adelman, Adam Formica

Lauren Adelman and Adam Formica exited the meeting at 9:30 p.m.
Dr. Spangler exited the meeting at 10:17 and returned at 10:19 p.m.
Ms. Burns exited and immediately returned to the room at 10:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING ON FY 10 BUDGET

Dr. Bodie had reviewed the FY 10 Budget Update dated as May 26, 2009. The School Committee members had received FY 10 Recommended Budget Reductions Tier 3 and Tier 4 from the administrative team over the weekend and the impact amount of each tier was given, as were impact statements. Dr. Bodie included in the committee's documents the FY 10 Budget Bullets dated as May 26, 2009.

Members of the public testified regarding the proposed budget:

Ms. Juli Brazile expressed appreciation to the committee once again on the receiving the budget information and how the impact statements are important to the PTO's so they can continue to find ways to support each school.

Ms. Lisa Fenchel inquired if the additional sales tax increase received by the Town of Arlington would have a positive impact to the schools.

Mr. Josh Lobel suggested getting flexible on how the school delivers services to students and suggested a savings by having non-professionals support the professional staff during the day.

Ms. Angela Alton reiterated Ms. Starks's comments about looking at energy cost savings and bringing this number down.

Ms. Jennifer Parker suggested that Dr. Bodie plan several scenarios on the budget and requested having the Ottoson Middle School schedule ready by the first day of school. Ms. Parker had asked what criteria the administrative team used to determine tier 3 and tier 4 reductions.

Ms. Mary Frances Gidas, Dallin Parent questioned classroom sizes and criteria to have hiring classroom aides.

Ms. Barbara Goodman expressed appreciation to the School Committee for the impact statements and holding a second Public Budget Hearing. Ms. Goodman inquired about the additional \$260,000 offsets from the Special

Education Budget and was concerned how student services were being delivered with the reduction. Ms. Goodman suggested to the committee that the process of the FY 11 Budget should include more parent involvement.

FY 10 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

Ms. Starks inquired about the enormous professional development line item and Ms. Mazzarella informed the committee that most of the professional development budget comes from grant money, which includes Title 2 grants. Dr. Bodie stressed the importance of professional development to the teachers in the Arlington Public Schools.

Ms. Starks inquired about the expense line item in the FY 10 Budget on salary commitments and stated that some schools are not taking raises or step increases and that teachers are taking days off without pay. Ms. Starks inquired if teachers, union members and the administration would consider this approach before cutting 14 teachers and making classroom sizes 27 at elementary or 30 plus at the high school. If this action were to be taken by staff, Ms. Starks expressed to the committee that the schools would not need the reductions of Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Ms. Burns discussed the economic situation, recommended that the committee plan for the worst, and then celebrate the additions. In Tier 4, it was suggested to reduce the Athletic Departments budget by \$50,000 but Ms. Burns stressed the importance of keeping students involved and said that cutting the freshmen teams who pay the same fee as the varsity players would reduce the entire athletic fee budget immensely.

Ms. Burns expressed concern that the Special Education Department has become top-heavy and noted that if the state will not provide the funding then we should not provide the reports. Ms. Burns said we should only provide the services. Ms. Burns encouraged the Superintendent and the administrative team to explore creative ideas for next year's budget by restructuring, redistricting or regionalizing.

Ms. Burns moved to request and authorize town counsel to provide oversight and make recommendations on ongoing arbitration including a review of billing, evaluating strategy and making recommendations to the district via the School Committee, seconded by Ms. Heigham.

**Roll Call: Mr. Thielman - No, Ms. Heigham - No, Mr. Curro - No, Ms. Burns - Yes, Mr. Curran - Yes, Dr. Spangler - No and Ms. Starks - No
Voted 2-5, motion failed**

As the Chief Financial Officer, Ms. Mazzarella pointed out that all legal financial expenditures currently total \$263,000 and are tracked via spreadsheet. Ms. Mazzarella stated that the chair of the School Committee, Mr. Curran, is in receipt of all legal fees and the committee members are receiving all financial notices each month from Stoneman, Chandler and Miller.

Ms. Burns commented that her request had nothing to do with the way the CFO has presented her reports. Ms. Burns was questioning the oversight of who was called as a witness, how all legal costs in the arbitration are spent, and that she would prefer to have our town counsel review the steps. Ms. Burns felt she is not qualified enough to judge what information the attorneys are providing, therefore, she recommends town counsel input.

Ms. Heigham did not agree to have an oversight of legal fees as we have received status updates on arbitrations during executive sessions.

Mr. Thielman asked if Dr. Bodie had any comment about the arbitration motion, and Dr. Bodie prefers not to comment on the ongoing arbitration. Mr. Thielman stated that he would not support Ms. Burns's motion to have another attorney approving our attorney's strategy.

Ms. Curran expressed support for Ms. Burns's motion, because he would like to be able to confer with town counsel when questions arise and to check if the school is appropriately spending money handling this arbitration.

Mr. Curro encouraged Mr. Curran, as the Chair of the School Committee, to confer with Mr. Miller from Stoneman, Chandler and Miller, at any time, if he has any legal questions about the case or other matters. He also expressed his confidence that Ms. Mazzarella would seek clarification for any questionable costs, as with any other item in the budget.

Dr. Spangler confirmed that we are receiving legal fee information each month from the CFO, as per policy, and said the audit on legal fees had been completed with nothing out of order, therefore, Dr. Spangler affirmed he will not support the motion as it was presented. Dr. Spangler suggested that he would support asking Town Counsel and Stoneman, Chandler and Miller to appear and answer specific questions during another Executive Session.

Dr. Bodie encouraged the School Committee to consider voting the FY 2010 Operating Budget of \$38,430,596, in order to allow the budget to be presented to Town Meeting on June 8, 2009. Dr. Bodie believed that having the committee vote the budget would give her and Ms. Mazzarella time to submit all needed documents to for Town Meeting. When asked by Mr. Thielman, Dr. Bodie said she and the administration would have each step in place to properly notify staff on staff reductions by the required date of June 15, 2009.

The committee continued to discuss the budget and noted the next fiscal year will be as difficult and agreed that a restructuring approach or reconfiguration of the schools systems should be considered.

Mr. Curro moved to request that the Superintendent come back to the School Committee in September with a preliminary proposal of ways we might approach redistricting and/or reconfiguration of the school systems, such proposal to be vetted through the fall with stakeholders in the district with a goal of final approval by the end of this calendar year, seconded by Ms. Burns.

Ms. Burns asked if Mr. Curro would consider an amendment to his motion to ask that each proposal that comes forward include a cost-benefit analysis and timeline on how long it would take to develop, so they could compare all the information. Mr. Curro accepted the amendment.

Mr. Curran concurred with the motion. When asked by Mr. Curran, Dr. Bodie noted that restructuring is something she and the administration had planned on doing, but said that redistricting would not address class size issues. Dr. Bodie pointed out that restructuring would take a lot of research and planning before it could be implemented.

Ms. Heigham suggested adding a committee member to work directly with the Superintendent on this restructuring plan.

Dr. Spangler encouraged the Administration to review, discuss with the administration and then bring proposals to the committee. Ms. Burns suggested that the Budget, Community Relations, and the Policy and Procedures Subcommittees should be involved, as policies from each would be impacted with the restructuring plan. Mr. Thielman suggested adding this language to the motion.

*Dr. Spangler questioned if a motion was needed and after Dr. Bodie announced that restructuring discussions were already being planned for this summer, **Mr. Curro withdrew the motion.***

Ms. Heigham had suggested the committee think clearly and prioritize what is acceptable to cut and not acceptable. It was recommended by Ms. Heigham that class sizes be fair across the board and suggested working on the budget figure not including the \$500,000 that had previously been set aside by School Committee vote.

Dr. Spangler suggested to Dr. Bodie that she create a budget working with the Senate numbers and vote the Tier 3 and Tier 4 cuts tonight to help prepare a budget he could vote on. Dr. Spangler requested that the administration go back and look at the open enrollment policy to mitigate the impact of class sizes at the elementary. Dr. Spangler had suggested holding an additional School Committee meeting to further discuss the final number.

Mr. Curro pointed out that the committee had not received the enrollment projections for next year that were requested at the last meeting. He also pointed out that the open enrollment policy might need to be changed or suspended in order to accomplish what Dr. Spangler proposed. Mr. Curro inquired regarding notifications of the School Committee when positions become vacant, and also questioned whether the fee structure for athletic participation should be reviewed to see if there was a revenue-neutral way to better encourage kids to take up a first sport.

Mr. Curran inquired if a plan was in place to support the students from the Thompson School if something in the building needed to be repaired or replaced. It was reported by Dr. Spangler that the Thompson School Feasibility Study, once completed, would include where the students will go.

Ms. Burns, Vice Chair, invited Mr. Fanning, a member of the Finance Committee to make a recommendation on a bottom line figure the committee could vote on tonight. The suggested figure from Mr. Fanning that was \$38,430,596.

***Mr. Thielman moved that the Arlington School Committee vote the bottom line number of \$38,430,596 for FY 10 Budget, seconded by Ms. Burns
Voted 6-1, Ms. Heigham opposed***

Ms. Starks clarified that the committee was not voting on the tier reductions, but that the committee was voting on the amount of money the Town is making available for operating expenses. Dr. Bodie had hoped the School Committee would give her approval of Tier 1 and Tier 2 reduction to include in the presentation packet to Town meeting.

Ms. Burns moved that the Arlington School Committee meet on Tuesday, June 2, 2009 at 7:30 p.m., seconded by Dr. Spangler.
Voted 7:0

Dr. Spangler moved to direct the Superintendent to come back to the committee on June 2, 2009 with the Tier 1 and Tier 2 reductions and any changes built into a detailed salary and expense budget, seconded by Mr. Curro.
Voted 7:0

Mr. Curran, Chair, invited Mr. Fanning to the table to answer questions about Town Meeting procedures when voting on the School Budget.

Ms. Mazzarella confirmed that the budget would be included in the packets on Friday.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The job description for a District Elementary Reading Teacher was discussed and the following motion was made.

Mr. Thielman moved to approve the job description of the District Elementary Reading Teacher, seconded by Mr. Curran

Mr. Curro asked Mr. Thielman if he would accept an amendment to his motion to include ", said authorization to expire upon vacancy of this position".

Ms. Heigham inquired if Dr. Bodie had brought the job description to the AEA, and Dr. Bodie stated she had not because the only change to the description was "District".

After members discussed the impact of tracking job descriptions, **Mr. Curro withdrew his proposed amendment.**

Mr. Thielman's initial motion was unanimously approved – with no amendment – by a vote of 7:0.

SUPERINTENDENT REPORT

Dr. Kathleen Bodie, Interim Superintendent Reported on the following:

- One case of Swine Flu was confirmed at the Brackett School. All notices regarding this have been posted to the School Department website.
- The Dallin Principal search has been continuing, and Dr. Bodie would like to appoint a principal by the end of this school year.
- Dr. Bodie and Dr. Raemer attended a State meeting, "Race to the Top."
- Ms. Mazzarella pointed out the savings of \$18,000 by Cost Containment efforts on credit card usage within the school and town.
- Staff Appreciation Day will be held on June 4, 2009 at 2:45 p.m. and this year we will honor professional status teachers as well as staff employees with 35 and 25 years of service.

ROUNDTABLE

Mr. Curran moved to appoint Mr. Thielman to Permanent Town Building Committee, to appoint Ms. Heigham as Chair of the Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee, and to have Ms. Burns and Mr. Curran be appointed to the Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee, seconded by Ms. Burns.

Point of Order - Dr. Spangler asked if the committee voted to the re-authorization of the Superintendent Search Process Subcommittee yet. Mr. Curran replied that the committee approved the re-authorization at the last meeting.

Second Point of Order - Dr. Spangler stated support for the School Facilities Working Group appointment of

Mr. Curran and requested to break down proposed appointments into three motions.

Mr. Curran and Dr. Spangler both consulted Town Counsel on the policy BDB that states the Chair of the School Committee has the authority to designate an appointment and the committee has the authority to approve the appointments. Dr. Spangler has no problems with the recommendation, but would like to follow policy.

Mr. Curran would like to get further clarification from Town Counsel before voting the motion.

After Dr. Spangler suggested to Mr. Curran breaking the one motion into two motions, the following motions were made.

Dr. Spangler moved to approve Mr. Curran's appointment of Mr. Thielman to the Permanent Town Building Committee, seconded by Mr. Curro.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Thielman stated to the committee that he would not support either appointment made by Mr. Curran.

Mr. Thielman moved to suspend the rules of Policy BDB, seconded by Dr. Spangler.

Voted: 7-0

Ms. Burns asserted that the Committee had just suspended their authority to approve the appointments made by the chair, Mr. Curran, and stated her belief that Mr. Curran did not require the approval for any appointments.

Ms. Burns expressed her fury that the Committee did not support Mr. Curran's appointments at the previous School Committee meeting, from which she was absent.

Ms. Heigham expressed discontent with Ms. Burns's comments and accusations. Ms. Heigham continued to express her disappointment that the Chair did not consider individual skills and qualifications when he made appointments.

Mr. Curran expressed his rationale to the committee on his appointments, and asked for respect regarding his decisions from the committee.

Ms. Heigham reminded the Committee that she at one time had doubts regarding the policy language of Election of School Committee Officers, BDAA. She stated, however, that she has faith and supports Mr. Curran to lead the committee.

Mr. Curran expressed appreciation for Ms. Heigham's point of view.

After additional discussion on the appointments, Mr. Thielman said that Dr. Spangler would be the best person for the position, but is willing to serve on the Permanent Town Building Committee

Mr. Curro motioned to move the 11 o'clock rule to 11:10 p.m., seconded by Ms. Heigham.

Voted: 7-0

Dr. Spangler moved to reinstate the rules, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Voted: 7-0

Dr. Spangler moved to table the Superintendent Search Process Appointment until further clarification regarding the effect of a rules suspension, seconded by Mr. Curro.

Voted: 7-0

Per Policy BGC - Policy Revision and Review, Ms. Burns informed the full committee that she intends to review the following policies for 2009 – 2010 - section G, I, J and K.

Mr. Curran moved to table the remainder of ROUNDTABLE AND THE SECRETARY REPORT to the next meeting, seconded by Dr. Spangler.

Voted: 7-0

CONSENT AGENDA all items listed with an asterisk (*) are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a member of the committee so request, in which

event the item will be considered in its normal sequence.

- * Approval of Ida Robbins Award recipients for 2009**
- * Approval of Warrant #09160 in the amount of \$400,579.65 dated May 12, 2009**
- * Approval of minutes of Regular Meeting March 31, 2009,**
- * Approval of minutes of Regular Meeting April 14, 2009**
- * Approval of minutes of Organizational Meeting April 14, 2009**

Ms. Heigham moved to approve the CONSENT AGENDA and requested to pull out the Regular Meeting of March 31, 2009 minutes, the Regular Meeting & Organizational meetings of April 14, 2009 and Regular Meeting minutes of April 28, 2009, seconded by Mr. Curro

Voted: 7-0

Dr. Spangler moved the 11 o'clock rule to 11:15 p.m., seconded by Mr. Curro.

Voted: 7-0

Mr. Thielman moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of March 31, 2009, seconded by Dr. Spangler.

Voted: 6-0-1, Ms. Starks abstaining

Dr. Spangler moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes and Organizational Minutes of April 14, 2009, seconded by Mr. Curro.

Voted: 7-0

Dr. Spangler moved to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2009, seconded by Mr. Thielman.

Point of order - Ms. Burns asked that the School Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary be listed first under the minutes of the meeting.

Voted: 6-0-1 Mr. Thielman abstained

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Curro moved to adjourn at 11:14 p.m., seconded by Mr. Curran.

Voted: 7-0

Respectfully submitted by

Karen Fitzgerald

Administrative Assistant

Arlington School Committee/jc